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ABSTRACT

Responses to a survey questionnaire completed by 1,070 migrant students who returned to school after dropping out were tabulated and listed by response frequency to determine student characteristics that will help migrant educators predict dropout behavior and address its causes. Participating students were enrolled in 13 High School Equivalency Programs (HEP) in 10 states. Responses indicated that a "typical" HEP student is 17-21 years old; speaks English or Spanish; has 2-7 siblings; is the child of parents who have not graduated from high school; left school at age 16 or 17; left school in the 10th or 11th grade; was not enrolled in a migrant program in school; attended school regularly; decided to return to school with the advice and encouragement of family members or friends. The three most frequently given reasons for leaving school were failing in classes, not liking school, and having very few credits for graduation. HEP students' responses confirmed findings that being average for grade placement puts students at risk for dropping out--less than 6% of HEP students surveyed were at or above grade level when they left school. Data tables and the eight-page survey form are included. (JH2)

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ED264070

SURVEY ANALYSIS

Responses of 1070 students in
High School Equivalency Programs
1984 - 1985

Interstate Migrant Secondary Services Program
State University of New York College at Oneonta
Oneonta, New York 13820

December 1985

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RC 015548

HEP students represent a special population of migrant students - those who have dropped out of school and have made the decision to return. The Interstate Migrant Secondary Services Program's purpose in surveying this population was to determine factors in their school and family experiences which may have influenced their decision to leave school. Initial planning and approval of the idea began at the National HEP/CAMP Association Conference in February 1984. The first draft of the questionnaire was developed by Larry Rincones, Janet Ockerman, Jesse Vela, David Randall, and Bob Levy; it was then field-tested at the Pan American HEP Program. Comments from the field-testing, along with other input from HEP and CAMP Directors, were incorporated into the final format of the survey. In addition, Carlos Guffain (Catholic University of Puerto Rico HEP) arranged to have the survey translated into Spanish. HEP programs began administering questionnaires to their students in the fall of 1984. A total of 1070 students from thirteen HEP programs in ten states have completed surveys. Surveys then were coded by IMSSP staff and entered on the data base by the computer services staff of the State University of New York's College at Oneonta. Preliminary results of the survey were presented to members of the HEP/CAMP Association in April of 1985. At that time Association members offered suggestions of correlations to be examined and provided advice about how the information could be most helpful to them. One result of the surveys is a listing of the responses given to the survey questions (Appendix A). These "National Frequency Counts" make it possible to profile a "typical" HEP student. He or she:

- is 17 to 21 years of age
- speaks English (50%) or Spanish (45%)
- has 2 to 7 siblings
- was 1st, 2nd, or 3rd born
- is the child of parents who have not graduated from high school

- left school at age 16 or 17
- left school in the 10th or 11th grade
- has worked principally in field work, manual labor, or as a cashier/clerk
- was not enrolled in a migrant program in school
- attended school regularly
- decided to return to school with the advice and encouragement of parents, friends or other relatives

The reasons HEP students gave for leaving school, in order of frequency, were as follows:

1. failing in classes
2. didn't like school
3. had very few credits for graduation
4. had to work; family needed money
5. didn't feel a part of school
6. had problems with teachers
7. felt older than other students
8. needed at home
9. got suspended and didn't go back
10. had problems with other students

These findings agree with the results of the HEP/CAMP National Evaluation Project's Research Report: "Overview of Student Characteristics and Program Outcomes". This research project reported that 85% of HEP students were 17 to 20 years of age; that the mean family size was 8.67 persons; and that the majority of respondents had a total combined family income of less than \$10,000 (Research Report No. 2, p. 9).

This research report also points out two other important facts:

"HEP and CAMP students are members of a population that is perhaps the least well served in contemporary American education. This is not necessarily a criticism of the educational system, but rather points out the difficulty of serving this highly nontraditional population through conventionally structured educational programs and institutions. Second...this population is "at severe risk" of failure in achieving conventional educational goals and objectives. Research conducted on the educational achievement patterns among other disadvantaged populations indicates that students from low-income backgrounds, from minority backgrounds, and from families with low levels of parental educational achievement are significantly less likely to complete high school and some college than any others in the educational system."

Thus, results of research on HEP students have implications for all migrant educators. The information gained from the IMSSP survey of HEP Students can be used to improve in-school programs for migrant students, as well as HEP programs. One striking element of the survey responses is the overwhelming influence of family. Question 36 asks students to indicate who helped them to decide to return to school. The most frequent answer was "parents", followed by "friends", "brothers and sisters", "no one/myself" and "other relatives". Parents of HEP students generally are not high school graduates. Yet they are the primary motivators for the students' decisions to return to school. It would seem then that parent involvement is a key objective for both in-school migrant programs and for HEP programs. Keeping parents informed and active in their children's education can help keep students in school and can make the difference in their interest in returning to school.

A second factor of importance is appropriate age/grade placement. Being overage is the leading predictor of dropout behavior; migrant students are at exceptionally high risk.

FACT: "Being retained one grade increases the risk of later dropping out by 40-50%; two grades increases the risk by 90%." (Bachman, Jerold G., et. al., 1971. Youth in Transition, Volume III: Dropping Out - Problem or Symptom?)

The "average" 14 year old is in the ninth grade; 15 year olds are in tenth grade; 16 year olds are generally in the eleventh grade; and 17 year olds are seniors. Other studies

have shown migrant students to be at least one to two years below grade level in terms of placement. HEP students follow that same pattern. Less than SIX PERCENT of HEP students surveyed were at or above grade level when they left school.

The problem of inappropriate age/grade placement did not begin at the high school level. Advocacy for proper placement is necessary at all grade levels. A New York State Education Department study (1965) ranked the frequency of certain characteristics in dropouts and produced a predictability model. The top two items on the list were "more than two years older than peers" and "one or more years below grade level". The HEP student responses as to why they left school re-confirm these findings.

Consequently, the IMSSP examined the age and grade at which HEP students left school. Both age and grade of school leaving were compared for students whose fathers did/did not graduate high school and for students whose home language was English or Spanish. The results of these comparisons are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Similarly, the IMSSP investigated the problems facing junior high school age migrant students. A series of student forums were held with junior high school migrant students to get their perceptions of what causes their peers to begin to think about dropping out of school. Responses to the question "Of the friends, relatives and acquaintances you know who have dropped out of school, why did they quit?" centered on school problems and family problems, with school problems dominating. Not liking school was most frequently based on disinclination to learn, boring teachers, and fighting and/or talking back to teachers. Some students spoke of teacher apathy and negativism toward migrants. Some felt that, regardless of aptitude and incentive, migrant students are placed in non-academic courses and that migrant students are more likely than other students to be disciplined with out-of-school suspension.

In terms of the effect of migrant education programs on students, HEP survey responses showed that students enrolled in migrant programs generally had higher grades than

TABLE 1

	Age Left School					
	14	15	16	17	18	19
Yes, Father Graduated H. S.	1.4%	14.0%	24.8%	36.0%	18.2%	3.3%
No, Father Didn't Graduate H. S.	5.2%	14.2%	25.4%	26.6%	16.7%	4.3%
English	3.6%	14.3%	27.0%	29.2%	15.5%	4.5%
Spanish	4.6%	13.0%	23.2%	28.5%	18.4%	4.0%
Grade Left School						
7th	30.8%	38.5%	11.5%	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%
8th	15.5%	30.9%	24.5%	12.7%	3.6%	0.0%
9th	6.6%	28.8%	41.5%	16.5%	5.2%	0.5%
10th	1.8%	13.9%	34.6%	32.5%	13.9%	1.4%
11th	0.4%	1.5%	16.7%	43.0%	28.1%	6.1%
12th	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	39.5%	40.3%	16.9%

TABLE 2

	Grade Left School					
	7	8	9	10	11	12
Yes, Father Graduated H. S.	0.9%	5.6%	18.2%	30.8%	26.6%	15.4%
No, Father Didn't Graduate H. S.	2.8%	11.3%	20.7%	25.1%	24.0%	10.9%
English	1.5%	8.5%	19.4%	25.8%	26.0%	15.8%
Spanish	3.3%	11.7%	19.5%	27.0%	24.1%	6.7%
Age Left School						
14	16.7%	35.4%	29.2%	10.4%	2.1%	0.0%
15	6.5%	22.1%	39.6%	25.3%	2.6%	0.0%
16	1.1%	10.2%	33.2%	36.6%	16.6%	0.4%
17	0.3%	4.6%	11.4%	29.7%	36.9%	16.0%
18	0.0%	2.2%	6.2%	21.9%	41.6%	28.1%
19	2.3%	0.0%	2.3%	9.3%	37.2%	48.8%

students who were not enrolled in migrant education programs:

	Grades				
	A	B	C	D	F
Yes, Enrolled in Migrant Program	1.7%	32.0%	37.7%	13.1%	3.4%
No, Not Enrolled in Migrant Program	1.6%	18.6%	46.2%	22.2%	3.8%

Significantly, HEP students who were and were not enrolled in migrant education programs felt differently about whether there was someone special in school that he/she could go to for advice. Of those enrolled in migrant programs, 75% said "yes", compared with 58% of students not enrolled in migrant education programs.

Results of the survey also showed some differences in the responses of male and female HEP students, particularly about the reasons they left school. These responses are shown in Table 3. Generally, the ranking of reasons was comparable, but women students gave family-related reasons more often than men students. It is important to keep in mind that most of the reasons given by students for leaving school are school-related. This is a key area for migrant program involvement. While advocacy with parents can help some students to stay in school, many more students can be helped through advocacy with schools.

This survey project has made it possible to take an in-depth look at a population of migrant students who chose to leave school. The information gained through this project will help migrant educators to better predict dropout behavior and to better address its causes. The Interstate Migrant Secondary Services Program staff members wish to thank the HEP programs who participated in this endeavor. Most importantly, we also thank the students who provided the information that will continue to benefit other migrant students.

TABLE 3

<u>REASONS FOR LEAVING SCHOOL</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>MALES</u>	<u>FEMALES</u>
Failing classes	34.3%	37.1%	31.5%
Didn't Like School	29.8%	32.6%	26.8%
Few Credits for Graduation	27.7%	32.0%	23.1%
Had to Work, Family Needed Money	25.0%	29.1%	20.3%
Didn't Feel A Part of School	22.0%	24.3%	19.5%
Problems With Teachers	21.6%	28.6%	13.9%
Felt Older Than Other Students	15.7%	16.2%	15.0%
Needed at Home	14.4%	9.7%	19.5%
Got Suspended	13.6%	20.0%	6.6%
Problems With Other Students	13.1%	15.7%	10.4%
Family Moved a lot	12.7%	11.9%	13.7%
School Work Too Hard	12.2%	14.0%	10.4%
Friends Dropped Out	11.8%	13.7%	9.8%
Got Married	11.4%	3.4%	20.1%
English Was a Problem	11.0%	15.3%	6.3%
Family Illness	9.3%	6.3%	12.5%
Pregnancy	8.8%	0.1%	17.2%
Personal Illness	7.1%	4.9%	9.4%
Problems with Counselors	6.2%	9.0%	3.1%

APPENDIX A

HEP Survey

National Frequency Counts

Sex	Male	52.0%
	Female	48.0%
Home Language	English	49.5%
	Spanish	44.7%
Second Language	English	29.7%
	Spanish	16.8%
Birth Order	First	19.6%
	Second	16.4%
	Third	15.4%
	Fourth	11.8%
	Fifth	11.2%
	Sixth	6.8%
Father H. S. Grad.	Yes	20.0%
	No	75.5%
Mother H. S. Grad.	Yes	20.5%
	No	76.4%
Age Left School	15	14.4%
	16	24.8%
	17	28.6%
	18	16.6%
Grade Left School	8th	10.3%
	9th	19.8%
	10th	26.2%
	11th	24.6%
	12th	11.6%
Age in 9th Grade	14	18.5%
	15	33.3%
	16	17.9%

Done Since Left School	Worked all the time	23.9%
	Worked now and then	35.8%
	Worked at home	15.8%
	Looked for a job	9.6%
What Kind of Job (answers 1-3 combined)	Field Work	22.5%
	Laborer	7.8%
	Clerk	5.1%
	Fast Food	4.9%
	Construction	5.6%
	Factory	5.7%
	Warehouse	3.8%
	Cashier	4.0%
	Health Aide	1.9%
	Cook	3.7%
	Janitor	3.0%
	Waitress	3.5%
	Truck Driver	2.2%
	Child Care	3.0%
	Housecleaning	2.4%
Why Left School	Failing Classes	34.3%
	Didn't Like School	29.8%
	Few Credits	27.7%
	Had to Work	25.0%
	Didn't Feel Part of School	22.0%
	Problems with teachers	21.6%
	Felt Older than Other Students	15.7%
	Needed at Home	14.4%
	Got Suspended	13.6%
	Problems with Students	13.1%
	Family Moved a Lot	12.7%
	School Work Too Hard	12.2%
	Friends Dropped Out	11.8%
	Got Married	11.4%
	English Was a Problem	11.0%
	Family Illness	9.3%
	Pregnancy	8.8%
	Personal Illness	7.1%
	Problems with Counselor	6.2%
Did You Like School	A Lot	25.1%
	Sometimes	66.3%
	Not at All	6.8%
Active in Extracurriculars	A Lot	28.6%
	Sometimes	40.9%
	Not at All	27.6%
Feel Welcome in Activities	Always	48.5%
	Sometimes	33.7%
	Never	11.8%

Encouragement from Counselors	A lot	25.5%
	Sometimes	38.1%
	Not at All	32.7%
Ever Visit Counselor	Yes	66.7%
	No	30.8%
Why	Scheduling	37.0%
	Grades, Test Results	26.0%
	Trouble at School	21.6%
	Personal Problems	21.5%
	Information Re: Jobs, Career	17.6%
	Early Withdrawal, Late Entry	13.4%
Encouragement from Teachers	A Lot	31.9%
	A Little	49.2%
	None	16.6%
Someone Special to go to for Advice	Yes	61.0%
	No	36.4%
Who did you Talk to About Problems	Friends	41.1%
	Family	26.5%
	Teacher	8.0%
	No One	7.8%
	Counselor	7.1%
	Someone in Church	2.7%
Grades	Mostly A's	1.5%
	Mostly B's	21.2%
	Mostly C's	44.8%
	Mostly D's	19.5%
	Mostly F's	3.6%
Failing Any Courses When Left School?	Yes	60.7%
	No	37.0%
Enrolled in Migrant Education Program	Yes	16.4%
	No	63.5%
	Don't Know	17.4%
Instruction in English a Problem	Yes	16.1%
	Sometimes	46.6%
	Never	34.3%
How Often Went to Classes	Almost Every Day	44.4%
	Missed Once a Week	26.2%
	Missed 2-3 Times a Week	20.9%
	Missed 4 Times a Week	6.8%
When Missed School was Family Contacted	Yes	53.0%
	No	24.8%
	Don't Know	11.7%

Ever Suspended	Yes	39.3%
	No	56.0%
Why	Truant	51.1%
	Fighting	50.0%
	Trouble with Principal	27.8%
	Drugs or Alcohol	11.9%
If Suspended, Ever go Back?	Yes	75.8%
	No	11.9%
Plans after GED	College	45.3%
	Full-time Employment	43.8%
	Training	33.0%
	Technical/Vocational School	22.1%
Who Gave Advice and Help in Your Decision to Return to School?	Parents	35.2%
	Friends	34.0%
	Brothers/Sisters	23.8%
	No One	20.8%
	HEP Recruiter	20.6%
	Other Relatives	16.1%
	Former Teachers/Counselors	13.9%
	Someone in Church	3.9%
Why Enrolled In HEP (ans. 1-3 combined)	Better Job/Career	24.3%
	Further My Education	14.3%
	Get Into College	11.0%
	Sense of Accomplishment	10.7%
	Help Myself in the Future	9.7%
	Learn What I Didn't Learn in H.S.	5.5%
	Family	3.8%
	Sounded Good	3.4%
	Get Away From Home	2.9%
	Get Some Training	2.6%
	Friends	2.4%
Type of Job Wanted	Health Occupations	12.5%
	Computer Field	9.8%
	Secretary/Office Worker	9.5%
	Business	8.1%
	Building Trades	7.5%
	Mechanic/Auto Body	7.2%
	Teacher	4.0%
	Cosmetologist	3.1%
	Social Worker/Psychologist	3.0%
	Military	2.8%
Annual Family Income	No Answer	68.6%
	Less than \$7,000	26.2%
	More than \$7,000	5.2%
Race/Ethnicity	No Answer	49.8%
	Hispanic	35.0%
	Black, not Hispanic	6.9%
	White, not Hispanic	4.5%
	Mixed	3.2%

APPENDIX B

HEP SURVEYS RECEIVED

Catholic University of Puerto Rico	168
Center for Human Services (Maryland)	45
IDEAS (Woodburn, Oregon)	47
Mississippi Valley State University	85
Pan American University	174
SER - Jobs for Progress, Inc.	50
Training and Development Corporation (Maine)	28
University of Colorado (4 sites)	101
University of Houston	114
University of the Pacific	61
University of Southern Colorado	27
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee	26
Washington State University	144
Total:	1070

APPENDIX C

In order to help migrant students who are still in school to stay in school, we are trying to learn more about migrant young people who have decided to return to school. The local HEP is part of a national study about going back to school after having quit. Following are some questions which we would like you to answer about your school experiences. Your answers will be confidential and protected like your school records. Please answer as honestly as you can. The answers will not in any way affect your standing in the HEP.

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I. Please answer the following questions about yourself:

1. Name: _____

2. Sex: 1 Male 2 Female

3. Birthdate: / /
Month Day Year

4. What language do you speak most at home? (Home Language)

1 English

2 Russian

2 Spanish

4 Other (specify):

5. Do you speak a second language? (Second Language)

1 Yes
↓

2 No → Go to Question 6

a. If yes, what language is that?

1 English

2 Russian

3 Spanish

4 Other (specify):

b. What language are you most comfortable speaking?

1 Home Language

2 Second Language

6. How many brothers and sisters do you have? (Include step and/or half brothers and sisters.)

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7. Thinking about your family and starting with the oldest child as number 1, what number child are you?

23 24

8. How many of your brothers and sisters have graduated from high school? (Do not include G.E.D.'s)

25 26

9. How many brothers and sisters have earned their G.E.D.?

27 28

10. Did your father graduate from high school?

29

1 Yes 2 No

11. Did your mother graduate from high school?

30

1 Yes 2 No

12. Were you born in either the United States or Puerto Rico?

31

1 Yes 2 No

a. If no, how old were you when you started school in the United States or Puerto Rico?

32 33

II. Following are some questions about your school experiences.

13. What was your age when you left school?

34 35

14. What grade were you in when you left school?

36 37

a. If 9th through 12th grade, how old were you when you started 9th grade?

38 39

b. If you were in high school when you quit, which of the following programs were you in?

40

1 College Preparation

2 Regular

3 Vocational or Trade

4 Other (please describe)

15. What kinds of things have you done most since you left school? (Check only one.)

41 42

1 Worked all the time (for wages).

2

2 Worked now and then (for wages).

3

3 Worked at home.

4

4 Looked for a job, but couldn't find one.

5

5 Hung out with my friends.

6

6 Other (specify): _____

16. If employed, what kinds of jobs did you have?

43 44

45 46

47 48

17. After you left school, did you ever try to go back?

49

1 Yes 2 No

18. a. As well as you remember, how many schools have you attended?

1. _____ Number of different elementary schools.

50 51

2. _____ Number of different middle/junior high schools.

52 53

3. _____ Number of different high schools.

54 55

- b. As well as you remember, how many schools did you usually attend each year?

1. _____ Number of elementary schools.

56 57

2. _____ Number of middle/junior high schools.

58 59

3. _____ Number of high schools.

60 61

19. Following is a list of reasons often given for quitting school. Please mark as many as might apply to you.

a. School-Related Reasons

- _____ I didn't like school.
_____ Got suspended (kicked out) and didn't go back.
_____ I didn't feel a part of the school.
_____ School work was too hard.
_____ Had very few credits for graduation.
_____ Was failing in classes.
_____ Had problems with the teachers.
_____ Had problems with the counselor.
_____ Felt older than the other students.
_____ Had problems with other students.
_____ Taking classes in English was a problem.

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b. Family-Related Problems

- _____ My family moved a lot for work.
_____ Needed at home.
_____ Had to work; family needed the money.
_____ Family illness.

73

74

75

76

c. Personal Reasons

- _____ Got married.
_____ Got pregnant.
_____ Personal illness.
_____ Friends dropped out.

77

78

79

80

20. How much did you like school? Would you say:

- _____ I liked it _____ Sometimes I liked _____ I didn't
1 a lot. 2 it, sometimes I like it
didn't. at all.

81

82

- 83

- 84

- 85

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92 93

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- 95

27. In the past, when you had a problem, who did you talk to most about it? (Check only one.)

<u> </u> 1	A teacher	<u> </u> 5	A friend my own age.
<u> </u> 2	A counselor	<u> </u> 6	Other (specify):
<u> </u> 3	A family member		
<u> </u> 4	Someone in church (priest, nun, pastor, etc.)		

96

28. When you were in school, what were your grades?

<u> </u> 1	Mostly A's
<u> </u> 2	Mostly B's
<u> </u> 3	Mostly C's
<u> </u> 4	Mostly D's
<u> </u> 5	Mostly F's

97

29. When you left school, were you failing any of the courses you were enrolled in?

<u> </u> 1	Yes	<u> </u> 2	No
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98

30. When you were in school, were you ever enrolled in a migrant education program?

<u> </u> 1	Yes	<u> </u> 2	No	<u> </u> 3	Don't know
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99

31. When you were in school, was having instruction in English a problem for you? Would you say:

<u> </u> 1	Yes, most of the time.	<u> </u> 2	Sometimes	<u> </u> 3	Almost never a problem.
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100

32. When you were in school, how often did you go to classes/school? Would you say:

<u> </u> 1	I went almost every day.	<u> </u> 2	I missed about once a week.	<u> </u> 3	I missed 2 to 3 times a week.	<u> </u> 4	I missed about 4 times a week.
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101

33. If you missed a lot of school, did anyone from the school get in touch with your family?

1 Yes 2 No 3 Don't know.

102

34. Were you ever suspended from school (kicked out, got in trouble with the principal)?

1 Yes 2 No → Go to Question #35

103

- a. If yes, why were you suspended? (Check any that apply.)

 Truant (cutting school)

104

 Fighting

105

 Drugs or alcohol

106

 Trouble with principal

107

 Other (please explain)

108 109

- b. If yes, did you go back go school?

 Yes No

110

III. Following are some final questions. These are about your feelings toward HEP.

35. After getting your GED, what are your plans? (Check all that apply.)

 Full-time employment

111

 Technical/vocational school

112

 College

113

 Training

114

 Other (specify): _____

115 116

36. In making your decision to return to school, who gave you advice or help? (Check all that apply.)

☐ No one	☐ My parents
☐ My brothers/sisters	☐ Other relatives
☐ Friends	☐ Someone in the church (Priest, nun, pastor, etc.)
☐ Former teachers or counselors.	☐ Other (specify):
☐ HEP Recruiter	

<u>117</u>	<u>118</u>
<u>119</u>	<u>120</u>
<u>121</u>	<u>122</u>
<u>123</u>	<u>124</u>
<u>125</u>	<u>126</u>

37. Other than getting your GED, what things made you decide to enroll in HEP?

<u>127</u>	<u>128</u>
<u>129</u>	<u>130</u>
<u>131</u>	<u>132</u>

38. What type of job or career would you like to have?

<u>133</u>	<u>134</u>
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39. What training/education is needed for that job/career?

<u>135</u>	<u>136</u>
<u>137</u>	<u>138</u>

To be completed by HEP staff:

40. Number of members in family: _____

<u>139</u>	<u>140</u>
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41. Annual family income: _____

<u>141</u>	<u>142</u>	<u>143</u>	<u>144</u>	<u>145</u>
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42. Race/Ethnicity:

☐ 1 White, not Hispanic	☐ 4 Indo-Chinese
☐ 2 Black, not Hispanic	☐ 5 Other (specify): _____
☐ 6 Hispanic	

<u>146</u>
